

Senator Harkin Introduces Bill to Make Promise Neighborhoods a Federally-Authorized Program

Washington, DC – May 17, 2011 – National advocates for the federal Promise Neighborhoods program today lauded Senator Tom Harkin, Chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, for his new bill to help ensure Promise Neighborhoods will continue to spark sustainable change for communities and children across America.

“Sen. Harkin’s bill brings hope to millions of children living in poverty in our country today,” said Angela Glover Blackwell, founder and CEO of PolicyLink, a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity. “The bill is a crucial step toward supporting sustainable Promise Neighborhoods to meet the long-term needs of communities. This bill deserves speedy consideration and bipartisan support.”

Inspired by the successful Harlem Children’s Zone model, Sen. Harkin’s Promise Neighborhoods legislation combines high-quality education with community- and family-based supports, and creates a continuum of services from cradle through college to career. The bill’s original co-sponsors are Sen. Barbara Mikulski, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, Sen. John Kerry, Sen. Bob Casey, and Sen. Al Franken. [Read the bill here.](#)

“Our experience in Harlem shows that working hard over the long term, holding ourselves accountable, and eliminating all the barriers to academic success is our best shot at saving poor children and forever changing the fortunes of neighborhoods,” said Geoffrey Canada, President and CEO of the Harlem Children’s Zone. “This legislation is the right thing to do morally and the smart thing to do economically, and I am deeply grateful to Senator Harkin for leading the Senate effort to break the cycle of generational poverty through Promise Neighborhoods.

Currently, the Promise Neighborhoods program is funded through a year-to-year appropriations by Congress. In 2010, more than 330 communities applied for 21 planning grants, totaling \$10 million. Even more communities are expected to apply for \$30 million in Promise Neighborhoods funding authorized for FY 2011.

Sen. Harkin’s legislation would help make the Promise Neighborhoods program sustainable in the long-term by including it as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and authorizing five-year, renewable grants to help communities scale up their services and sustain their programs.

“Sen. Harkin knows that Promise Neighborhoods make a difference because they focus so strongly on positive outcomes for children and families. This bill brings that critical focus on results to many more communities,” said Frank Farrow, Director of the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP).

PolicyLink, the Harlem Children’s Zone, and CSSP have created the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink to help support burgeoning Promise Neighborhoods. Recently, more than 500 organizations signed on to a PolicyLink letter of support for Sen. Harkin’s legislation.